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| Annotate the biographical information: Underline key ideas, circle words you don’t know or are important, write questions you may have as you read. | Write the main idea for each paragraph. |
| ***“A Poem for My Librarian, Mrs. Long” by Nikki Giovanni***  **Author Biography and Historical Context**    Do you remember your first visit to your public library? Is there someone who introduced you to books or gave you books that made you love reading? Nikki  Giovanni’s experiences at her public library as a child were so strong and so important to her that she wrote a poem dedicated to her librarian.    Nikki Giovanni was born into a divided world – a world separated by color. When Nikki Giovanni was born in 1943, black and white children were segregated; they went to different schools. It wasn’t until the 1950s that schools were desegregated. When you read ―A Poem for My Librarian, Mrs. Long‖ you’ll notice references to racial inequality that she recognizes as part of her life growing up.    Nikki Giovanni grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio, but she and her older sister spent their summers with their grandparents in Knoxville, Tennessee. Nikki’s parents were both teachers though they both eventually moved from teaching to other jobs to better support their family. Shortly after Nikki’s college graduation, her grandmother died.  She wrote poetry as a way to cope with her grief. Her first book of poems Black Feeling Black Talk was published in 1968 and was widely recognized as an important piece of literature. Shortly afterward, she published her next collection of poetry. Her poetry was so powerful and impressed so many readers that she earned the nickname the  ―Princess of Black Poetry.‖    As an adult, Nikki Giovanni continues to write and teach. She writes about the things that are important to her – civil rights and equality. She’s written poems, plays, reviews, and stories for children; she has also made recordings of her poetry readings. She has received many awards, including being the first person to win the Rosa L. Parks Woman of Courage Award. She also received the Langston Hughes Medal for poetry. Currently, she is a professor at Virginia Tech, but she also gives lectures around world.    **Growing up in the 1940s and 50s**  What was life like when Nikki Giovanni was growing up? When you read ―A Poem for My Librarian, Mrs. Long, ‖ you’ll discover that life was different than it is today.    When Nikki was born, the United States was involved in World War II. Radio was a primary source of entertainment. Families listened to radio shows not unlike soap operas and game shows on TV today. But television was gaining popularity, and after the war, there was a boon in TV sales. Of course, there were no computers, cell phones, microwaves, MP3 players, or video games.    Prior to the late 1950s, racial segregation was an accepted law of the United States. The phrase ―separate but equal‖ was used to describe facilities for blacks and whites. Nikki went to a black school and would have visited the black library.  Other important events during those decades include Alaska and Hawaii gaining statehood, the end of racial segregation in schools, and a surge in the popularity of rhythm and blues music.    **A Carnegie Library**  You’ll read a reference in the poem to the Carnegie library. There were over 2,000  Carnegie libraries built around the world; the funds to build the libraries came from businessman and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. Carnegie was a Scottish immigrant who came to the United States and earned great wealth through the steel industry.    Carnegie always had a passion for books and donated much of his money to help build libraries and schools. The first library he built was in his Scottish hometown. Carnegie libraries were built between1883 – 1929. Many towns have schools, libraries, and streets named after him. |  |

Directions: Write a brief summary of the biographical information, and answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper using complete sentences.

1. When was Nikki Giovanni born, and where did she grow up?

2. List two facts about Nikki Giovanni that you learned from the article.

3. From your reading, infer what childhood experiences may have been important to her.

4. What childhood experiences might have been important to what she chooses to write about as an adult?

5. Explain why Nikki Giovanni was called the ―Princess of Black Poetry.‖

6. Explain why you think she decided to write poems after the death of her grandmother.

7. Do you agree that writing can be a good outlet for strong emotions? Why?

8. Based on context clues, what might the word philanthropist mean?